

Thawfest Interlude

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Summary: What went on between Hiccup and Toothless when they crash-landed in the meadow instead of winning the final event of the Thawfest Games? I think they had a rather intense confrontation.

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Toothless hit the ground hard and skidded to a halt, leaving a ripped-up trail in the grass behind him. Hiccup was thrown forward by the impact, but he'd seen it coming and braced himself. Once they'd stopped, he unhooked his flying belt and slid off his dragon.

Toothless was one notch below furious.

They had made up the time Hiccup had lost at the beginning of the obstacle course, overtaken Snotlout and Hookfang in the over-water part of the race, and had just passed them for the lead. Toothless didn't understand about the scoring of the Thawfest Games, or that the winner of this race would receive the medal for the entire competition. All he knew was that he'd been flying superbly, until Hiccup had pulled his tail out from under him when he was on the verge of outflying the other dragon. Now they had crash-landed in a meadow instead of crossing the finish line. Night Furies hate to lose. Especially when their own riders make them lose.

"Whoa! Settle down, bud! Easy!" Toothless didn't want to settle down. He wanted to win! But he could go nowhere without his rider, and his rider had dismounted. All Toothless could do was roar out his frustration.

"Toothless, please, let me explain!" Hiccup tried everything to pacify his angry dragon, but the dragon didn't want to be pacified.

He head-butted Hiccup, knocking him over.

"Quit it! Now you're acting just like Snotlout!" That brought the dragon up short. He'd never heard Hiccup use that name in any kind of good way. He snarled and glared at his rider.

"Now you're listening! That's good. Let me explain a couple of things to you." Hiccup stood, brushed himself off, and stared at his dragon.

"First off, did you hear how Dad talked to us before the race? He wanted us to win in the worst way. He's always wanted me to prove that I'm a real Viking, and we were one race away from making him the happiest man on Berk. But he didn't lean on me or threaten me â€" did you notice that?

"Now remember how Snotlout's dad talked to him? That was some serious pressure! That was almost a threat! If Snotlout lost, it would have made things really tense in the Jorgensen house for weeks."

Toothless made a disgusted snort and rolled his eyes. Somehow Hiccup understood what he meant. "Yeah, Dad did threaten me once, right after you saved me in the ring. But after he got us both out of the water, he figured out he was wrong, and he apologized. You were right there â€" you heard him! And he never did anything like that again.

"Spitelout hasn't learned that lesson. Snotlout has to deal with that kind of threats and pressure _every day of his life!_ Don't you think that's kind of hard on him?" Toothless let out a puzzled rumble.

"The second thing is that you're the best, smartest, fastest dragon on Berk, and everybody knows it except Snotlout." Hiccup rested his hand on Toothless' head, and the dragon didn't flinch away. "You know you had Hookfang beaten, and I know it, and I think Hookfang knew it, too. You've got nothing to prove. You prove yourself every day, and you'll go right on proving it when it really matters. Don't let anybody tell you that you got beaten by a Monstrous Nightmare, okay? It wasn't your fault."

Toothless was beginning to settle down, until Hiccup reminded him of the reason why they were standing in this meadow. He growled.

"Which brings me to the third thing. This isn't about my dad and Lout's dad. It isn't about you and Hookfang, either. It's about Snotlout and me.

"Ever since I was old enough to compete in the Thawfest Games, I was the big loser, every time. This time, thanks to you, I won a few races. In fact, if Astrid had won the axe-throwing event like she should have, it would have been three points for me, two for Lout and one for Astrid, and I'd be the big winner." Toothless growled again. "Sorry, _we'd_ be the big winners."

"So what?"

"I've already got the Best Dad award, and I've always had the Best Dragon award; Snotlout can't touch those. The only other award is

that silly little medal that he's going to wear around his neck for the next few weeks, and then it will go on the Jorgensen family mantelpiece along with all the other medals, gathering dust.

"Take that medal away from me, and it doesn't change a thing. Take it away from Snotlout, and he's got nothing. The guy can be a jerk sometimes, but I can't do that to him.

"He should have crossed the finish line by now, but let's give him another minute or two, just to be sure. He might have flown into a tree or something. I don't want to take this race away from him by accident.

"Oh, and another thing, Toothless? We are never going to tell him we threw the race on purpose, are we? The only thing that would humiliate him more than losing would be if he knew we let him win.

"You're the best, and we could have been the best together, if winning these Games was the most important thing there was. Those Vikings who raided as far as Lombardy came back with a saying â€" 'Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing.' I think they're wrong. You know we could have won it all, and so do I. But it's no big deal to us. To Snotlout, it's all he's got. Crushing a guy into the dirt, whether he deserves it or not, isn't worth a stupid medal, whether we deserve it or not.

"So today, he didn't get what he deserved, and neither did we. But I've got you, and he's got a medal. Who do you think is the real winner?"

Toothless pondered this for a moment, then laid his soggy, slurpy tongue across Hiccup's face.

"Ewww! Toothless!" Hiccup tried to wipe his face dry. "Well, I'm glad you got the idea. What do you say, bud? Shall we finish the race and let Snotlout get his gloating over with?"

Toothless made his "let's go" head-shake. Hiccup sprang into the saddle and hooked up, and they leaped into the sky.

Enduring the gloating wouldn't be fun. But he could think of worse things.

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A/N I threw in a bit of sneaky wordplay here. Lombardy is a portion of northern Italy; some real Vikings traveled that far. NFL coach Vince Lombardi is often given credit for the "winning isn't everything" quote.

End
file.